

FIRST RECORD OF WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*ZENAIIDA ASIATICA*) IN
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

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Abstract. --- I observed and photographed a single White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) on a telephone wire strung adjacent to the road leading from the main island road proceeding west to the Mango Restaurant on Nevis on the leeward side of the island of Nevis, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15), in St. Thomas Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies, on 22 September 2011.

Key words. --- Caribbean, White-winged Dove, Nevis, *Zenaida asiatica*.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*ZENAIIDA ASIATICA*)

Three (3) subspecies of White-winged Dove are listed by Dickinson (2003: 166). AOU (1998: 223), Dickinson (2003: 223), and Raffaele *et al* (1998: 300 & 469) do not show White-winged Dove occurring on the island of Nevis. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 300) state: ‘**This species is expanding its range eastward through the West Indies**’. A fuller description of the current ranges of White-winged Dove can be found in Raffaele *et al* (1998: 300) and AOU (1998: 223).

NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km² (circa 36 square miles), situated in the northern Lesser Antilles. Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore to a central peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000).

THE RECORDED SIGHTING

On 22 September 2011 I observed and photographed a single White-winged Dove perched on a telephone wire adjacent to the road that goes to the waterfront Mango Restaurant on the north side of The Four Seasons Resort, Nevis, West Indies (hereafter referred to as Mango Road). This road runs from Jessop’s on the main island road towards the west very near (c. 30-40 yards) the Caribbean Sea (the leeward side), on the island of Nevis (17 degrees, 9 minutes, 39.55 seconds N, 62 degrees, 37 minutes, 41.45 seconds W; WGS-84; and circa 28 feet above sea-level). The bird were studied through binoculars (Swarovski, 10x42 EL) at moderately close range (15 meters) in mid-day light and was also photographed. The bird was photographed by Mark Michael Ludlow with a Nikon Coolpix P-90 with a Nikkor 24X Optical Zoom ED VR 4.6 – 110.4 mm, 1:2.8 – 5.0 lenses (Figure1).

The southern section and this side of Mango Road on which the bird was observed can be characterized as an anthropogenically structured, highly manicured, artificial environment characteristic of golf courses and planned golf course communities. The Robert Trent II designed golf course is situated in a gently sloping area, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea, on the leeward side of the island of Nevis and is an artificial construct of a landscape that is in stark contrast to the substantially altered lower elevation landscapes of Nevis which characterize the northern side of Mango Road. These lower elevation areas are in an arrested state of ecological succession. Colonial period mono-agribusinesses and other contemporary anthropogenic activities caused the denudation of most vegetation up to the c. 305 meter (c. 1000 foot) elevations on the island which resulted in substantial soil erosion which continues into the contemporary period. This arrested ecological succession is greatly impacted by the behaviors of large populations of island wide free ranging ungulate species, to include: sheep; goats; donkeys; horses; pigs; and cattle. The impacts of these introduced animal species are effectively concentrated in what is relatively small island consisting of circa 93 square km (circa 36 square miles). Large populations of historic period introduced Vervet (Green) Monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*), believed to be of African origin, as well as introduced Mongooses (Family *Herpestidae*) further contribute to the alteration of the disfigured landscape and to the depauperate faunal composition and numbers.

This photo-documentation represents the first record of the presence of White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) on the island of Nevis, West Indies.

No action was taken to determine the subspecies, age, sex, or other physiological conditions of the individual.

This observation was part of the efforts of the newly formed Nevis Ornithological Society to document all of the species of birds to be found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands (the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis): An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis.

This White-winged Dove may represent a continuation of the eastward expansion of the species within the insular Caribbean (Raffaele 1998: 300). A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers and researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

The White-winged Dove is thought to be circa the 153th species of bird documented for the island of Nevis, West Indies (Ludlow 2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a).

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Figure 1. White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) on a telephone wire on Mango Road adjacent to the northern side of The Four Seasons Resort – Nevis, St. Thomas Parish, Nevis, West Indies, dated 22 September 2011. Photograph by Mark Michael Ludlow.